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COUNTRY Bulgaria

SUBJECT Kyrillos, First Patriarch of the Bulgarian Church

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1. Kyrillos, the present and the first Patriarch of the Bulgarian Church, was elected by the Synod of the Bulgarian Church against the formally expressed will of the Ecumenical Patriarch at the Phanar (Istanbul, Turkey). The Ecumenical Patriarch refused even to send representatives to see the new Bulgarian Communist Patriarch enthroned.
2. Kyrillos is a former Metropolitan, well known in Bulgaria as a very ambitious man and long prone to mix into politics. His character is opportunistic. Thus, before World War II he was closely linked with the old regime. During the war, he collaborated with the German occupation troops in Bulgaria. When the Germans and Bulgars jointly invaded eastern Thrace and Greek Macedonia, Kyrillos took charge of the reorganization of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the new territory. He was violently anti-Greek and showed his attitude by the harshness with which he treated the Greek population. This went so far that he was, at one time, regarded as a war criminal.
3. Immediately after the Communists came to power in Sofia, Kyrillos was arrested. For a time, he received bad treatment. The Soviet leaders, however, who had a far-reaching dossier on him, decided to let him go, and to keep quiet about the compromising documents they had found in the archives against him. They were perfectly aware that the ambition of Kyrillos would make him practically a prisoner of the Communist regime. As it turned out, they were entirely right.
4. It was Kyrillos who played the leading part in turning out the exarch Stefan (8 Sep 48), who had for many years been venerated by the Bulgarian Church. The exarch was regarded as dangerous. He alone was able to unite the secret anti-Communist Bulgarian forces. He is now interned at Bagna, near Karlovo.

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-2-

5. After the Exarch had been forced out, Kyrillos began to take a larger and larger part in Bulgarian ecclesiastical affairs. He showed himself more and more docile toward the Communist authorities and the Patriarch Alexei, of Moscow. His election as patriarch may be regarded as completely political.

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